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ABSTRACT

There is a widespread problem with schools having the ability to turn out young people equipped with skills needed to properly function in society. This report describes a program for increasing skills necessary for learning and for living such as cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship. The targeted population was elementary school students in a growing, middle class community. Faculty reported a weakness in student's interpersonal and social skills, and data revealed a lack of knowledge and skills related to working together, achieving personal best, problem solving, and making friends. Review of curricula content and instructional strategies revealed an over emphasis on skilled subjects, leaving little or no time for life skills to be taught in the classroom. Three categories of intervention were indicated: (1) an integrated unit to teach students basic life skill vocabulary; (2) the development of a program to implement the use of life skills in the classroom; and (3) a plan to connect the life skills throughout the entire school. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in awareness of the Life Skill vocabulary, an improvement in using and understanding Life Skills, and the development of a foundation for future growth. Twenty-two appendices account for 25% of the document and contain all materials used in intervention. Contains 41 references. (JBJ)

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IMPROVING STUDENT LIFE SKILLS THROUGH CLASSROOM INTERVENTION AND INTEGRATED LEARNING

by

Wendie Orkin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier Univeristy & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Master's Program

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Action Research Project
Site: Elk Grove, Illinois
Submitted: April 23, 1996

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Abstract

Author: Wendie Orkin Site: Elk Grove Village

Date: April 23, 1996

Title: Improving Student Life Skills

This report describes a program for increasing skills necessary for learning and for living such as cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship. The targeted population consists of elementary school students in a growing, middle class community, located in a suburb of a large Midwestern city. The problem of inadequate development of life skills was documented in teacher observations, student behavior, student interviews, and parent comments.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students have a lack of knowledge and skills related to working together, achieving personal best, problem solving, and making friends. Faculty reported a weakness in student's interpersonal and social skills. Reviews of curricula content and instructional strategies revealed an over emphasis on skilled subjects, leaving little or no time for life skills to be taught in the classroom.

Solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem settings, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: an integrated unit to teach students basic life skill vocabulary, the development of a program to implement the use of life skills in the classroom, and a plan to connect the life skills throughout the entire school.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in awareness of the Life Skill vocabulary, an improvement in using and understanding the Life Skills, and the development of a foundation for future growth as students move on in life.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Problem Statement

The students at the targeted elementary school district exhibit an inadequate development of skills necessary for learning and for living such as cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observations, student behavior, student interviews, and parent comments.

The Immediate Problem Context

The targeted elementary school consists of 526 kindergarten through fifth grade students. The racial/ethnic background of the school population includes 87.4 percent Caucasian, 6.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.5 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent African-American, and 0.0 percent Native American. The attendance rate of the students is 96.1 percent without any chronic truants in the school. The mobility rate is 12.1 percent. The number of low-income families who have children attending this school is 4.1 percent (The State School Report Card, 1993).

Of the 526 student, 26 are identified with specific learning disabilities (LD), 23 have behavior disorders (BD), 35 have speech or language problems, and 36 are identified as gifted. The LD students receive regular classroom instruction with resource help as needed. The BD students have been identified in their home school within the district and they are bussed to this site for remediation. Here they are divided into three self-contained classrooms. They are mainstreamed into the regular classrooms when progress in their behavior has been exhibited. The children who need speech or language services are seen by the speech therapist. The amount of time the child is seen by this teacher depends on the severity of the problem. The students identified as gifted receive extra instruction for one to two hours a week in math, reading, or both.

The full-time staff of the school includes: a principal, 20 grade level teachers, a computer writing teacher, a resource teacher of LD students, two teachers of self-contained BD students, a physical education teacher, a music teacher, a media resource specialist, three special education assistants, a library assistant, and a nurses's assistant. Part-time staff includes: a kindergarten teacher, a school psychologist, two social workers, a reading aide, an art teacher, speech therapist, and a nurse. Auxiliary personnel include a secretary and three custodians. The school personnel are

97.5 percent Caucasian and 2.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Ten percent of the staff are male and 90 percent are female.

There are 70 kindergarten students at this school. They are divided into four homerooms. There are two traditional single age classrooms of kindergarten, and two multi age classrooms of kindergarten and first grade. There are about 12 kindergartners in each non traditional aged class, and 12 first graders in each class. The average number of students in each class is 23. There are two students who receive speech and language services, two who are identified as gifted, and one who visits an occupational and physical therapist weekly. The children remain with their homeroom teacher all day, with the exception of physical education. The academic subjects are not departmentalized.

The school has a computer lab containing Macintosh computers. Additional technology is available to students and teachers in the Library Media Center which contains two laser discs, a video cam corder, and four T.V./video cassette recorders, and a modem to access telecommunication programs. Each primary classroom has a minimum of two Apple IIE computers and each grade level shares a Macintosh computer and a printer on a cart.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted school's community encompasses 8.28 square miles. The population of the community is 37,909. It has seen a 40 percent growth over the ten year period from 1980 to 1990. It is estimated to grow to 43,200 by the year 2005. The per capita income is $23,718 and the mean income per house hold is $64,797. The number of people living below the poverty level is 1.5 percent. The community consists of 94.2 percent Caucasian, 4.4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, two percent Hispanic, one percent African-American, .1 percent Native American, and .4 percent other. These figures are a result of rounding the raw figures.

The majority of the land use is residential with 33.9 percent being single family homes, six percent for single family attached homes, and 3.6 percent for multi-family dwellings. Open space in the community accounts for 14.5 percent with 3.4 percent of the community comprised of unoccupied buildings and residences. The remaining land is used for industry, office buildings, and commercial businesses. The mean value of a home is $175,529 and the median rent is $754.

The majority of the population (51.4 percent) within the community hold a college degree, and 23.3. percent more have some college background. For the remaining community, 19.4 percent are

high school graduates and 5.9 percent have less education (1990 Census of Population and Housing).

The targeted school is located within a large district located approximately 35 miles northwest of a metropolitan area. The district encompasses four suburban towns which consolidated into one district with nine elementary schools, grades k-6, and two junior high schools, grades 7-8. There are 6,621 students enrolled in the district who feed into two high schools.

The racial/ethnic background for the district is 73.6 percent white, 16.8 percent Hispanic, 6.9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.7 percent Black, and 0.1 percent Native American. The percentage of students from low-income families in the district is 12.2. Students in the district with Limited-English-Proficiency is 10.8 percent. The percentage in the district for attendance is 95.3, mobility 10.2, and chronic truancy is 0.1. Average class size for the district in kindergarten is 21.2, first grade is 22.3, third grade is 21.4, and sixth grade is 22.0.

The teachers in the district are 97.6 percent White, 2.1 percent Hispanic and, .3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. The teachers are 12.0 percent male and 88.0 percent female. The average number of years teaching experience is 15.0 years. The percentage of the teachers that hold Bachelor's Degrees is 35.6 and

64.4 percent hold Master's Degrees and above. The pupil-teacher ratio is 19.6:1, the pupil-administrator ratio is 281.0:1. The average teacher salary is $45,800. The average administrator salary is $75,710. Operating expenditure per pupil is $5,937.

The district participates in the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) which assesses students in grades 3-8 in reading, writing, mathematics or science and social studies for a particular grade level. All of the schools in the district participate in the Illinois School Improvement Plan. For the 1994-95 school year the district targeted five areas for planned improvement. Special target one: decrease the number of students "not meeting" state standards in the area of mathematics and reading. Special target two: increase the number of students "exceeding" state standards in the area of mathematics and reading. Special target three: increase student utilization of technology resources in the school setting. Special target four: increase student appreciation and respect for self and others (through increased involvement in multi-cultural, awareness-building, and service-oriented building programs and activities). Special target area five: increase home-school communications and partnerships.

This district uses a literature based reading program Houghton Mifflin, and the University of Chicago Math Program which is hands-

on math. Grades four through six visit the district's Discovery Science Center for a total eighteen hours hands-on science education. The primary grade levels receive bimonthly science kits which allow them to do the hands-on science program in their own classrooms. Fine arts instruction is provided by teachers specializing in these areas through a music education and art education programs. Computer technology instruction is provided by technology specialists. The district services gifted students through a pull-out program.

The district is committed to bringing more instructional technology to each school. Five million dollars has been allocated for this project. Within a five year period, the district is updating each school's Apple computer labs to Macintosh labs, equipping every classroom with a technology workstation, and providing technology education for faculty.

This district is currently undergoing significant changes. These changes include moving sixth grade out of the elementary schools into the junior high schools, opening an additional junior high. The junior high schools are transforming into middle schools. The administration is developing a middle school curriculum, which includes integrated the subjects areas. The bilingual programs will change from grade level centers at only a few schools in the

district, to students attending their home schools throughout the entire district. This may create multi-age classrooms.

Regional and National Context of the Problem.

There is a widespread problem with schools having the ability to turn out young people equipped with skills needed to properly function in society (Fine, 1995). The traditional school system concentrated on a vast array of knowledge and skills desperately trying to keep up with the increasing amount of curriculum needed to be covered. Therefore, there was no time for Life Skills to be taught in the classroom. With science and technology becoming such an important part of society, information in most subjects is doubling which makes it clear that more emphasis needs to be placed on teaching children "how to learn" and manage new information (Fine 1995.) A recent study of the National Assessment of Education Progress reports "test scores are going up in the basic skills, but not in every area. Scores are going down in relation to comprehension, practical application, and problem solving." (Costa 1992.)

Horace Mann, father of the common school, said "the highest and noblest office of education pertains to our moral nature. The common school should teach virtue before knowledge, for knowledge

without virtue poses its own dangers." (Amundson 1991). Schools need to support the role of character building to enrich learning. According to a national poll, 90 percent of the American people believe that emphasizing "habits of discipline" in school would make "a great deal of difference" in student achievement (Boyer 1995.) Students need to acquire virtues such as commitment to learning, cooperation, respect, and honesty or else "thinking strategies will only amount to one more gimmick in the curriculum." (Kilpatrick 1992).

A study was done in twelve countries surveying nine to eleven year olds about problems at their schools; 45 percent of U.S. students said cheating was a problem; 38 percent said stealing; and 67 percent of the students agreed that other students making noise and disrupting the class were major problems (Carnegie 1994.) There is a concern over the moral condition of American society which is forcing a reevaluation of the rule of teaching values in schools. Some of the changes in our society in the nineties stem from: the decline of the family life, troubling trends in youth character, and a recovery of ethical values (Lickona).

Children's moral development is very important and there are certain elements that are essential to this process which include controlling impulses, delaying gratification, and becoming aware of

others' needs. Daniel Putman believes that without these characteristics children are destructive to themselves as well as others (Putman 1995.) Teaching students basic skills necessary for learning and life will provide parameters that will help students evaluate their own performances, and guide them individually and in groups, to an understanding of which social behaviors will increase their success.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

Students in the targeted group begin their school experience knowing very few, if any of the Life Skills which include: cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship. Because of the developmental stage that these five and six year olds have attained, Life Skills are new to them. Children at this age are egocentric and are just learning the basics of life. Because these children are not tested on any norm referenced tests until third grade, subjective means were used to document the problem. A variety of assessment tools such as Life Skill checklists, student journals, classroom teacher and special teachers' observations, teacher opinions, parent Life Skill checklists, and student interviews where used to determine student's knowledge of the Life Skills.

When the targeted group first began their school experience in kindergarten, many were extremely shy, uncooperative, and very into themselves. The children asked many unnecessary questions without thinking through solutions to basic problems. The children showed a lack of awareness of other classmates and their feelings by not

listening, sharing, or recognizing other's ideas. This was not only noticed in the classroom, but also at specials. In gym class, the students had trouble listening, taking turns, and showing good sportsmanship. During library time, the children had difficulty listening to books, and showing responsibility for books that did not belong to them.

In talking with other teachers on a building level team who teach kindergarten and/or first grade, they pointed out many of the same behaviors. Students are constantly interrupting their classmates and teachers when they are talking. These bright young minds of the future are lacking in strategies for attacking problems. The nature of problems presented range from not knowing what to do if someone does not have a pencil, to not knowing an answer to a researchable question, to not knowing what to do when an older student is causing trouble in the bathrooms. The teachers felt that problem solving was a skill that could really help students each day of their lives, no matter what age. Another characteristic seen in primary students is the willingness to give up immediately and say, "I can't". The teachers were wondering how to encourage the students to try to persevere in their classrooms. Parents will often lose patience and just do the chore for the child rather than encourage the child to independently complete it. In the hallways,

teachers noticed a lack of caring among students. For example, if a student had his/her hands full another student would walk by and not offer help or not even hold the door. There was plenty of rough play on the playground, pushing in the lunch line, and unhappy talk to other students. Teachers were wondering how to create an environment that would be more caring and friendly.

In February of 1995, the first grade team attended a workshop by Susan Kovalick. Kovalick really emphasized the importance of teaching these primary students basic Life Skills. It is important to help children to develop Life Skills by creating an environment with the absence of threat. After discussing the workshops and the negative behaviors being displayed throughout school, the teachers decided to make this a focus and intertwine Life Skills throughout all curriculum areas. In addition to the grade level team focuses on Life Skills, this became a focus for the entire school.

Parents were asked to help assess the need for teaching Life Skills by completing a Life Skill checklist (Appendix A) with their child. This was done by observing and recording Life Skills at home and returning the survey to school.

Table 1

CHECKLISTS RETURNED BY PARENTS, SEPTEMBER, 1995

Checklists	Number of Students	Number of Checklists Returned
Life Skills: effort, patience, friendship, cooperation, caring	43	16
Life Skills: prob-solving, initiative, flexibility, perseverance, common sense.	43	10

The results indicate that over 60 percent of the targeted group of kindergarten families did not participate in observing and recording the Life Skills in the home.

Table 2

NUMBER OF TIMES LIFE SKILLS OBSERVED WITHIN ONE WEEK

TOTAL # OF EACH LIFE SKILL OBSERVED	
Effort	77
Patience	61
Friendship	22
Cooperation	24
Caring	88
Problem Solving	17
Initiative	24
Flexibility	17
Perseverance	18
Common Sense	30

The number of tallys on each student's sheets for every Life Skill was added up to get a total for the number of times students were using these Life Skills. These results indicate that parent observations of the sixteen students who returned their checklist are being friendly an average of about one time per week, displaying effort about 4.8 times a week, using patience 3.8 times a week, caring 5.5 times a week, and cooperating a little more than one time per week. The results of the parent observations of the ten students who returned the second checklist are using problem solving and flexibility about 1.7 times, showing initiative 2.4 times, using common sense 3.0 times, and perseverance an average of 1.8 times per week.

Students of the targeted groups completed journal pages at the beginning of the year. The assignment was to show or write about the specific Life Skill on the page. Teacher took down students' dictation (Appendix B). The majority of the students were not able to make a connection between the Life Skill and an experience where they may have used that Life Skill. Many students dictated to the teacher stories which were unrelated to the idea of the specific Life Skill on the page. The teacher tried to turn the child's story into an experience where the Life Skill could have been used; however, it was beyond most students' comprehension. The pictures that were

drawn in their journals did not represent the Life Skill as it was supposed to. Students completed journal pages after each Life Skill was introduced. This was a clear indication of the limited knowledge of Life Skills students had even immediately after the vocabulary had been introduced to them. Since the Life Skill vocabulary was so new to the students, it created an obstacle in understanding the true meaning of the words. The teachers found it necessary to begin a unit focusing around the Life Skills.

Probable Cause

The literature suggests many underlying causes for the lack of Life Skills being taught to children. According to Kovalick (1994) part of the responsibility of Life Skill knowledge falls on the schools. Society is revolutionizing yet schools are not moving with the times. The main goal in education is still knowledge and skill. There needs to be a transition from teaching mastery to teaching application. Teachers are still relying heavily on the use of textbooks to teach curriculum rather than hands-on experience. "Real life is the best curriculum for children; the curriculum must be reality-based."(Kovalick) Lastly, the focus on curriculum is the past; the focus on topics should be from the here and now. Webster's Elementary Dictionary defines "the here and now" as: "this place and

this time; the present." (Webster, 1980 p. 232) By following this recipe we can ensure that students are receiving a school experience that is relevant to their lives.

Even if the schools are changing, another problem preventing students from doing their best learning is the classroom environment. The environment should make students feel comfortable and secure, and focus on the absence of any threat. There are classrooms that make the walls come alive, and environments where children can sink themselves into the theme of study. Walls that reflect values and activities back to the students and teachers. "Some walls communicate excitement. Some invite touching. Some breathe life. Others just stand there, a stack of dead building materials." (Sylwester 61.) Recent brain research talks about how children will learn when they are not in the ideal classroom environment. Dr. Paul MacLean, first theorized the triune brain could be thought of as three brains in one, each part with a different responsibility necessary for human survival and growth; the different parts work together assessing the needs of situations at hand and what response is most needed (Education and the Brain 1978.) (Celebration of Neurons 1995.)

The first part is the brain stem thought to control genetic/instinctual behaviors such as hierarchies of dominance-

submission, sexual courtship, defending territory, hunting, bonding, nesting, greeting, flocking, and playing. Many of the structures around the brain stem in the limbic system are programmed very early for the roles they will play in our life, and we can't easily change them. "We don't learn our temperament and emotions they just exist, but we can learn how to deal with our temperament and emotions during various situations. Our actual feelings about situations do not change." (Sylwester 43.) The brain stem is always on the alert for life threatening events and when these conditions occur the brain downshifts. When "downshifting" occurs it has the effect of shutting off input to the much more slowly processing cerebral cortex and the limbic system. The brain stem has no language and can see and respond to visual input, but does not store it. In a day our attention level can vary in 90 minute cycles. (Sylwester 1995.)

The second part of the brain is the limbic system in charge of regulating eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, body temperature, chemical balances such as blood sugar, heart rate, blood pressure, hormones, sex, and memories. The limbic system has the power to override both rational thought and innate brain stem response patterns. We tend to follow feelings. "It is also the focus of pleasure, punishment, hunger, thirst, aggression, and rage." This

brain is always on the lookout for any threat; from the chance of public embarrassment, fear of low grades, to the threat of a classroom bully. These situations create downshifting out of the cerebrum, which is the home of academic learning. The limbic system is important in processing memory and emotion. "Classroom simulations and role-playing activities enhance learning because they tie curricular memories to the kinds of real life emotional contexts in which they will later be used." (Sylwester 44)

The third brain is the cerebral cortex which can think, solve problems, analyze, create, synthesize, and handle a multitude of complicated tasks. This is the home of academic learning; it handles language, symbols, writing an essay, or pondering issues and problems of the future. For cognitive learning to take place, students must be functioning in this brain, and the way to do that is creating an environment with an absence of threat. Students must remain upshifted into the cerebral cortex. Fear can disable student learning.

Our brain does not require that our problem solving mechanisms work at full potential most of the time; therefore, we must create problem solving situations ourselves to allow our mechanisms to keep in shape. Some of these situations are arts, games and social organizations which provide pleasant metaphoric

settings. For children, Piaget's suggestion is play. Children must play and participate in activities to help develop problem solving skills. To do a lot of our problem solving we rely on our common sense - a Life Skill. Our common sense can also lead us to many undesirable behaviors such as over generalizations of stereotyping and prejudice, as well as desirable behaviors, enjoyment of music, art, drama, invention, and other human experiences and explorations. According to Sylwester (1995), emotion is very important to the educative process because if drives attentions which affects learning and memory. "The emotional system defines our basic personality very early in life and is quite resistant to change. Emotions is often a more powerful determinant of our behavior than our brain's logical/rational processes." Sylwester (1995), asks us to pretend that emotion is the glue that helps us to connect an integrated curriculum with a curriculum that is broken up in separate pieces (p. 72)

In support of the brain research, the following lifelong guidelines were developed by Susan Kovalick: trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no put downs, and personal best. They are a set of social outcomes set for our students and our fellow educators, based upon respect for others and self, and when followed can ensure that students remain "upshifted" for learning.

Personal best is a hard one to measure; therefore the Life Skill chart was developed, by Susan Kovalick, as a guideline to follow. The purpose of the list of Life Skills is to provide "boundaries" that help students evaluate their own performance similar to rubrics. Classroom activities that help reinforce the Life Skills provide students with important contextual memory prompts that students need in order to recall information needed during a similar experience in the real world outside of school. It is important that teachers recognize the relationship between a stimulating, emotionally positive classroom environment and the health of the students (Sylwester 1995.)

Social problems in America are constantly increasing. Some believe that this is caused by schools failing to offer the moral education that they once did (Kilpatrick 1992.) Schools and churches played a key role and now parents must teach their children on their own. Statistics compiled from the Index of Leading Cultural Indicators in 1994 indicate that in the past three decades: violent crime has increased 56%, divorces have doubled, single parent homes have tripled, and there is a 40% increase in American births out of wedlock. The United States leads the industrialized world in murder, rape, and violent crime. American students are ranked at or near the bottom in math and science skills. Our culture seems to be

dedicated to corrupting the young just by the violence that children can watch on television (Bennett, 1994.) In many schools moral education is still being taught; however, the method is wrong (Flesch 1994.) The older theories of moral education no longer address many of the moral dilemmas that are in today's society. (Sichel 1994.)

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Analysis of the probable cause data suggested several reasons for the inadequate development of Life Skills. The primary students are still in the early developmental stage of learning and just beginning their school experience. Parents are not taking responsibility for teaching their children Life Skills that are needed to function in society. Schools need to keep up with the times. The age of technology is taking over and students need to have different skills. They need to be problem solvers. Schools need to be giving students a hands-on experience with practical knowledge rather than just factual knowledge. For these reasons, several possible solutions should be considered:

1. integrated thematic instruction (ITI) in the classroom should be developed and used by teachers at all grade levels to create more meaningful instruction for students;

2. introducing and teaching young children the basic Life Skills and then reinforcing these skills through every grade level;

3. modeling Life Skills,

4. creating a learning environment which has the absence of threat;

5. creating a classroom environment where students can experience the unit of study;

6. using multiple intelligences as a way of problem solving and meeting the needs of all students;

7. implementing a service project to involve the community; and

8. teaching students how to cooperate and collaborate.

The ITI model was designed on three basic principles. The first is brain research which allowed us to open a window on how children learn best. According to Ned Hermann (1990), brain research claims that when students are placed in an environment where there is threat, they shut down. Whether it be threat from the classroom bully, fear of a low grade, the possibility of public teasing - all of this creates downshifting out of the cerebrum. The second principle is teacher's strategies and techniques used in the classroom, and the third is curriculum development designed at the classroom level which has an understanding of the learners and the communities in which they live (Kovalick 1994.) Thematic units help students make connections between concepts facilitating learning transfer. Time spent on thematic instruction gives students an opportunity to explore particular ideas and concepts in greater detail (Costa 1992.) When students finish a theme they usually have a deep understanding of the topic. It is important when

choosing the topic that it is related to the student's lives and they can connect it to actual experiences in their own lives.

It is also important that these integrated units of study have a variety of teaching strategies such as explorations, direct instruction, multiple intelligences, and cooperative learning. Cooperation is one of the Life Skills, and the best way to teach children how to cooperate is to have them working in cooperative groups. Johnson and Johnson did studies on cooperative learning which showed that: students perform better cooperatively than individually, show higher achievement levels, cooperative learning enhances students' short term and long term memory as well as their critical thinking skills (which reaches the problem solving Life Skill), cooperative learning improves self esteem and confidence, intrinsic learning motivation increases, more pro-social behavior and more positive peer relationships (Johnson, 1979; Johnson and Matross, 1977).

Teaching the Life Skills can be woven throughout the curriculum so that it is not taught in isolation. By teaching through thematic instruction, teachers can easily weave the Life Skill of caring throughout their curriculum. "As the most important extrafamilial environment, schools are primary arenas for the promotion of caring." (Noddings, 1995) Just by modeling and

recognizing caring behavior or random acts of kindness, students will become more aware of the Life Skill. Follow-up group discussions after activities which emphasize Life Skills will give students a chance to think about how these Life Skills can be transferred to their own lives outside of school.

It is important to teach young children about Life Skills. When they enter kindergarten most likely they will not have been exposed to some of the vocabulary that helps conceptualize the skills involved. The vocabulary must be introduced along with a skill so that students can connect with the words and actions. Objects and activities for each Life Skill makes it easier for students to connect and remember the definition for the Life Skill. Throughout the year Life Skills are gently reinforced. Life skills can and should be taught to children from kindergarten to twelfth grade as long as it is done in an age appropriate fashion. The brain grows best when it is challenged; however, the curriculum should be considered in terms of the developmental level of the students (Kovalick 1994.)

Susan Kovalick believes that the best way to teach children is in an environment that has the absence of threat. To create this type of learning environment five behavior guidelines need to be taught and experienced; Kovalick identifies them as Lifelong Guidelines: trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no put

downs, and personal best. By using cooperative learning in the classroom, these social skills will develop quickly. (Bellanca & Fogarty) "The Lifelong Guidelines are literally the social outcomes we set for our student and for our fellow educators." (Kovalick 1992). To help guide students in evaluating their own performances or "personal best" Kovalick has come up with a list of Life Skills. These Life skills are to give students an understanding of what social behaviors will help them to be successful. The definitions of these Life skills are:

Integrity - to act according to a sense of what's right and wrong
Initiative- to do something because it needs to be done
Flexibility- to be willing to a alter plans when necessary
Perseverance- to keep at it
Organization- to plan, arrange, and implement in an orderly way; to keep things orderly and ready to use
Sense of Humor- to laugh and be playful without harming others
Effort- to do your best
Common Sense- to use good judgment
Problem Solving- to create solutions in difficult situation and everyday problems
Responsibility- to respond when appropriate, to be accountable for your actions
Patience- to wait calmly for someone or something
Friendship- to make and keep a friend through mutual trust and caring

Curiosity- a desire to investigate and seek understanding of one's world
Cooperation- to work together toward a common goal or purpose
Caring- to feel and show concern for others.

Teaching the Life skills is an important part of creating the absence of threat in the classroom.

An important technique to use in teaching these Life Skills is team building. Team building can be done by having students work in cooperative groups. Cooperative learning can teach children how to assist others when it is needed. It allows each child to feel greater self confidence in that they know the rest of their group is counting on them. Creativity flows easier in a group: each child may see different ways to solve problems or enhance learning. The students have more responsibility; they must organize their activity within a time frame. It allows students to show leadership and follower-ship learning (Bellanca 1992.)

A summary of the literature that addressed the probable causes and solutions to the inadequate development of Life Skills suggests the following strategies:

1. A Life Skills unit should be developed which introduces the vocabulary to young students.

2. Follow through activities that can be woven into thematic curriculum should be developed, so that students can see how these Life Skills are relevant to their lives.

3. Parents should be informed of the Life Skills throughout the year, and how they can reinforce and use the Life Skills at home.

4. Students need to be using these Life Skills in their daily life, and this can be accomplished by making them aware of these skills and the results of such use.

A Life Skill curriculum was implemented in the targeted group; this includes daily use of the Life Skills in the classroom with teacher support and recognition. The following section will review how this curriculum was implemented. The researcher and her team introduced the kindergarten students to the Life Skill curriculum at the beginning of the year, because research supports the teaching of the Life Skills throughout the year through the thematic curriculum.

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

The terminal objective of this problem intervention was related to the probable causes outlined in Chapter 2. Teacher observations, parent surveys, and behavior checklists indicate a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Life Skills. A review of the

literature suggested the need for Life Skills to be taught, and for the teaching to begin with young children. Therefore:

> As a result of implementing a daily Life Skills program during the period of September 1995 to January 1996, the kindergarten students will increase their awareness and use of the following Life Skills: cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship as measured by teacher observations, student behavior, student interviews, and parent comments.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. A series of learning activities to teach the Life Skill vocabulary will be developed.
2. Teaching techniques to reinforce these Life Skills throughout each day and throughout the current curriculum will be developed.
3. A measurement tool will be development to assess the Life Skill knowledge.

Action Plan for the Intervention

The implementation plan has been developed from an analysis of the probable causes and a review of the literature. Some of the activities described are only done one time at the very beginning of the school year to introduce to, and teach students, in the targeted

group the basic vocabulary and meaning of the Life Skills. There are other activities which will be ongoing throughout the year.

The implementation plan is presented below. All of the activities will be done with all of the students in the target group, and the teacher will initiate each activity. Unless otherwise noted, the activities will take place in the kindergarten classroom.

1. **Setting the Tone**

Teaching the Life Skills will be the only curriculum taught in the classroom for the first four weeks of school. In the classroom the Life Skills and the life long guidelines are displayed. They are written in large print so that the students can see them and read them from their tables. The Life Skills display is bright, colorful, and aesthetic pleasing so the children can enjoy looking and reading the Life Skills. On the first day of school at each student's place is a Life Skill survival bag. In this bag are objects that give each Life Skill a concrete representation so that students connect at a concrete level:

EFFORT - A gold star for when you do your best.

CARING - A ruler: you can "Count on me."

PERSEVERANCE - A stick of gum, so you can stick to something and keep trying.

FRIENDSHIP - A friendship bracelet to make a new friend.

CURIOSITY - Curious George to keep you curious all the time.

PATIENCE - Good things in life you may have to wait for.

RESPONSIBILITY - A wash-up to help you take care of yourself and other things.

PROBLEM SOLVING - A pencil sharpener to sharpen your mind.

COMMON SENSE - "Smarties" to help you be a smartie when making decisions.

ORGANIZATION - A paper clip should help you to keep things in order.

INTEGRITY - Smiles and Frowns to help you to think about what is right and wrong.

COOPERATION - A puzzle piece to remind you to work together.

INITIATIVE - A charge card for you to take charge of yourself and other things.

FLEXIBILITY - A rubber band to help you to be flexible.

SENSE OF HUMOR - Laffy Taffy because laughter should be in every day of your life.

The class will go over each of these Life Skills and the objects in the bag that represent the Life Skills. The student's will take home their Life Skills bags on the first day. Parents will also receive a note explaining what the Life Skills mean and how this will be the focus for the first four weeks of school. The note also emphasizes how important it is for parents to talk about the Life

Skills at home so that their child becomes more familiar with that vocabulary and the related behaviors.

2. Activities to teach the Life Skill vocabulary

Introducing the Life Skill vocabulary is done at a very fast pace. Each day a new Life Skill is introduced and activities to follow. After five Life Skills are taught then there is a review day to go back and discuss. Students are not expected to remember and know each Life Skill. At the kindergarten level, this is just to get the students familiar with the vocabulary, so they can recognize the word. The following two activities are done with each Life Skill that is introduced. The teacher reads a story to go along with the Life Skill, and then the class discusses it. Each student writes a journal page about the Life Skill. Students are encouraged to draw a picture of themselves or somebody else using the Life Skill that is highlighted. If they can write about their picture they are encouraged to, if not the teacher will take dictation under the picture.

Each Life Skills has specific activities to help the students understand what the Life Skill really means.

a. Effort - Students have a simple task to complete such as writing their A,B,C's and if they are truly putting in the effort and trying their best the teacher will give them a gold

star. (this is an assessment situation where the teacher determines subjectively whether the student is really doing their best)

b. Patience - Students practice using patience during a M&M activity. Each student is given some M&M's and a number card. Students may not have any M&M's until they hear a number that is the same as the one on their own card.

c. Friendship - Students make a friendship pin with beads and safety pins. Students are then given a card. They need to find the person with the matching card, and then trade pins with them. New friends then share a treat together provided by the teacher. It is nice to trade pins with another class.

d. Caring - Students pair up with a buddy and plant flower seeds in a cup. Students then have to care for these flowers by watering them and making sure they have sunshine.

E. Cooperation - Students are in groups and they work together in their group to put together a 100 piece puzzle.

F. Organization - Students are given an outdoor scene on paper with eleven parts. Students need to color and cut out all the pieces. They have to try and organize these pieces on piece of paper so that all of the pieces fit and are in the proper order.

G. Sense of Humor - Students come to school dressed in their silliest and craziest outfit. They can also bring one joke or riddle to share with the class.

H. Problem Solving - Students are given a plate of cookies at each table. They needs to figure out how everyone can get the same number of cookies.

I. Responsibility - Students will bring an egg (hard boiled) in a container decorated like a bed. Students will care for their egg the entire day. The egg is symbolizing a baby, and they mustn't leave their egg at any time.

J. Curiosity- Students make a curious "c" book for curiosity. This class book is a take off on the book called Look Look.

K. Integrity- This is a difficult skill for students to immediately understand. Have the students sit in a circle and close their eyes. Pass around a bag full of candy and have the students take a certain number of pieces. Discuss with students if they did the right thing and took the amount they were allowed.

L. Initiative- While students are out of the room, have the room messed up. When students return to class, recognize

the students who automatically takes the initiative to start cleaning and straightening the room up.

M. Flexibility- This activity requires a few classrooms to get involved. Set aside a certain time period where your class becomes flexible. Classes can then go around and bump other classes out of their rooms. When your class gets bumped from your room, you talk about flexibility. When you get to a new room, have the students brainstorm ways that they could still do work in the new room (especially if you can get bumped into a Spanish classroom, where there is only Spanish written on the walls.

N. Common Sense- This is an easy Life Skill to model and recognize. Students can practice their common sense by playing the common sense game show. Ask students questions which are related to their life and environment, and have them come up with answers or solutions using their common sense.

O. Perseverance - Students can practice perseverance by making their own butter. Butter is made by using heavy cream and shaking it until it forms butter. Students need to continuously shake for it to turn. They may get tired or bored; however, this is when perseverance is needed!

3. Implementing the Use of Life Skills in the Classroom.

One of the most practical ways to use the Life Skills in the classroom is recognizing, and modeling the skills as you see them. Point out to the children which students are using a Life Skill, and then have them figure out which Life Skill is being used. It is also nice to record which Life Skill is being used most often. This can be done by tallying, or graphing. Have the name of the Life Skills written at the top of a piece of graph paper or plain paper. Whenever the teacher or the students recognize a Life Skill being used and which Life Skill it is, the teacher or student can put a tally or graph under the skill. Students can then see which Life Skill they need to work on more, or which Life Skill they really use a lot. Depending on the grade students may just want to focus on a couple of Life Skills at a time rather than all fifteen. Older grades may be able to handle all the skills.

Students are exposed to cooperative learning on a routine basis. Students will visit learning centers two times a week, and they are assigned to a buddy. They will go center to center with this buddy and when they have a question they must rely on their buddy first before they go to the teacher. Students will also work on group projects at their assigned tables about once a week. Not only do

cooperative learning activities focus on the Life Skill of cooperation, but also the Life Skills of friendship, caring, and effort.

In the kindergarten classroom students enjoy having something to show that they did well. When the teacher or student notices a particular student using a specific Life Skill then that student can wear a Life Skill necklace. A Life Skill necklace has a specific picture that relates to a specific Life Skill, and the name of that Life Skill written on it; examples: a busy bee to show initiative, flower to show caring, or a star and apple to show effort. At the end of the day, when students return their necklace, students receive a certificate congratulating them on their modeling of that Life Skill.

In addition to weaving Life Skills throughout the everyday routine, each thematic unit of study also includes a focus of Life Skills. During the unit of "All About Me -Things I Can Do," students learned a lot about what they were able to do. This unit lent itself to encouraging students to preserver and keep trying till they could tie their shoes, or write their name. Activities were also done by the students which involved partners and working cooperatively. Students learned how much more they could accomplish by working with a partner. During a Wild Animal unit, there were discussions on how to keep animals safe and cared for. Each unit houses many

opportunities to talk about Life Skills and how important they are to everyday life.

As a kindergarten and first grade team, the children are working on service projects to tie the Life Skills into the community. Students have chosen a large nursing home in the area. For every holiday, the students make cards and projects which get delivered to the home. Since it is difficult for the students to visit, they will send video tapes or special events that the folks at the home might enjoy.

4. The Link of Life Skills With the Home

During curriculum night in September, we informed the parents about the Life Skills and what they were about. At the end of the week a sheet went home so that parents could tally Life Skills that they were recognizing at home. They then returned these sheets to school the following week. Parents are informed of activities which focus on Life Skills through a weekly newsletter. Parents are also encouraged to come and help out in the classroom for centers.

5. Life Skills Throughout the Entire School

The kindergarten and first grade teachers at the targeted school work very closely as a team. These Life Skill activities are

done with all the kindergarten and first grade students. There is a lot of collaboration between classrooms to do bigger activities that involve more people.

For the upper grade levels a peer mediation/conflict resolution program came into effect which is directed towards the entire school; however, at the kindergarten level they are not there long enough to attend one of these sessions. The goal of the Life Skills is to teach students to think about their actions, and other people before they get into trouble. Hopefully, when this group of students reaches 6th grade there won't be a need for mediation because students will be taking care of their problems on their own by using their Life Skills, or mediation will be easier because of a common vocabulary for communication.

Most teachers of the school have the Life Skills and their definitions posted in their classrooms. Every week in the school newsletter which goes home to every parent, the principal focuses on a Life Skill by writing the definition, and giving an example of how this Life Skill has been used around school, or how it could be used. Every classroom in the school is doing a community service project. Most of these projects involve the other classes and is ongoing. Examples of projects are: saving pop tabs, recycling wire hangers, donating used books to a bilingual classroom, sending cards

during every holiday to nursing homes, and recycling the plastic loops that six packs have around them. Each month or two there are assemblies to update the school on how that project is going. National Random Acts of Sensible Kindness Week was celebrated at the school. Students would write RASKS for people when they did kind things for them. The principal then read these RASKS over the loud speaker each day. These activities are the focus to creating a learning community.

Chapter 4
Project Results

Implementation History

The terminal objective of the intervention addressed the need for direct instruction of Life Skills in a kindergarten classroom. The results of teacher observations, and a teacher survey indicated that children were in need of remediation. Therefore, the terminal objective stated:

> As a result of implementing a daily Life Skills program during the period of September 1995 to January 1996, the kindergarten students will increase their awareness and use of the following Life Skills: cooperation, perseverance, problem solving, and friendship as measured by teacher observations, student behavior, student interviews, and parent comments.

The instruction of the Life Skills began at the start of the school year in September. As the students entered their classroom on the first day of school, a large Mickey Mouse display of the Life Skills and their definitions were posted on the wall (Appendix C). The display was colorful and aesthetically pleasing for the children to look at. The Lifelong Guidelines were also posted on the wall with Jimminy Cricket symbolizing the guidelines as your conscience."

As the children sat down they found a bag at each of their seats. These were Life Skill survival kits. In each of the bags was a list of the Life Skills (Appendix D), their definitions, and objects to represent the Life Skills. There was an object to represent each Life Skill, so the bag contained a total of 15 things. On the first day of school, each child opened their bag and pulled out a prescribed item as the teacher talked about the Life Skill that it symbolized. The large vocabulary words were used, but it was also explained to the children in simpler terms. This was the children's initial exposure to the Life Skills. The children were asked to take the bags home and go over each item in the bag with their parents. The response from the children was very positive; they were excited and interested to learn more about these large words.

The first week of school was basically overall discussions of the Lifelong Guidelines. The class was also to discuss and vote on rules they thought were needed in their classroom. As each Lifelong Guideline: trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no put downs, and personal best was talked about, the realization came to the children that these covered all of the classroom rules that the class would like to follow.

The second week of school the children studied the theme of Life Skills. Each day, a new Life Skill was introduced to the

children. The teacher began with the easier Life Skills, first, such as caring, cooperation, and friendship. These are important Life Skills to begin the kindergarten year. Students had difficulties making new friends, sharing, and adjusting to being in a class with twenty four other students and only one teacher. After having a group discussion on how students could be kind, caring, and friendly to classmates, positive results were immediately seen. Students were constantly offering to help one another with assignments; things such as cutting, writing letters, and coloring for their friends and classmates. Things got to the point where the teacher felt that maybe they were helping each other too much, and certain students who were taking advantage of helpful classmates needed to refocus on the Life Skill of effort.

Effort was a Life Skill that the teacher felt was extremely important. The students entered kindergarten at a wide range of ability levels, some students couldn't write their names, and other students were beginning to read. It was emphasized to the students how important it is to always do their best. No matter what level they work, they always have to try. The teacher told the students that the word "can't" was not to be used in the classroom. It took students some time to understand and use this Life Skill; however, now this Life Skill, effort, is used most often in their vocabulary.

Another teacher in the building was told by a student, who is an older sibling of a kindergartner, that her little brother constantly walks around the house with the Life Skill sheet in his hand. He continually talks about effort and how he must try his best!!

The Life Skill of perseverance goes hand in hand with effort in many ways. Students made their own butter to practice the Life Skill of perseverance. They had to shake, shake, shake the heavy whipping cream until it became butter. Students were complaining about the difficulty of the activity, but were encouraged by classmates, and the teacher to keep at it. In the middle of the year, students had another test of perseverance when they made snowmen using toilet tissue. They had to cover an entire two liter bottle with small squares of toilet tissue. Each square of the tissue needed to be wrapped around the top of a pencil, dipped into glue, and stuck onto the bottle. Many of the students used perseverance on this project as they kept gluing the toilet tissue on the bottle until it was entirely covered. As students finished with their own project, they offered to help classmates finish. At the end of the year, students will have the ultimate test of perseverance. This will be the first year that kindergarten students participate in jump rope for the heart. They will get sponsors and then they will have to jump rope for a certain time period to receive the money from their

sponsors. This exercise will truly bring home the meaning of perseverance.

Patience is a Life Skill that all children and adults need to practice and to become more aware of throughout every day. At the beginning of the year, the children in the targeted classroom displayed very little patience. The children were unable to show patience when birthday treats were passed out, or materials for projects were being distributed.

On the rug, during calendar time, when students are called upon to answer questions, the other classmates had great difficulty giving their friends the chance to think and answer the question; they did not want to be patient. Students also needed to learn to be patient when wanting attention from the teacher. Throughout the school year, the teacher was able to point out to the students several opportunities where they were using the Life Skill of Patience. Students did not shout out answers to questions as quickly, on the rug, when the student called upon did not have the answer right away. When assemblies or special event days did not begin right away, students in the targeted class waited very quietly and patiently. Each time birthday treats were passed out to the class, the students would wait and watch until every student had a

treat, they sang "Happy Birthday," and then everyone would eat at the same time.

When students began school, they did not know how to cooperate. They would fight, argue, and grab things away from one another. One of the initial Life Skill activities for cooperation was putting together puzzles in groups of four or five students. There were four tables working on four different puzzles; however, not one table was able to accomplish this task in the specified hour time limit. Interestingly, during the week of the one-hundred-days-of-school celebration, the class revisited this activity trying to put together four one hundred piece puzzles in table groups. This time three out of the four tables were able to accomplish this task within the hour time frame.

Cooperative Learning skills were taught to the students when the vocabulary word cooperation was formally introduced to the students. The teacher discussed the roles that were involved in working cooperatively, the happy talk that needs to be used, compliments, and sharing time at the end of it. The students worked in cooperative pairs twice a week. Each month they were assigned a new partner. The groupings were done differently each month. The students sometimes were paired with a high and low student to teach one another, and students were also paired by equal abilities

to challenge one another. This helped students learn different roles they needed to play as a partner. Cooperative pairs took place mostly during center time.

Students also worked in cooperative groups at tables with 4-5 students, where they were working on a project related to the theme of study. An example of this was during the unit of Wild Animals, students worked in cooperative tables to design a stuffed animal. They had to draw it, cut it, paint it, and stuff it together. Students also worked in groups to illustrate the lines of a poem about camels. Each group of students was only given one piece of paper. Students also worked cooperatively to put numbers in order from 1-20; the numbers were in the shape of bananas, students made monkeys to glue onto the page to go with the theme. The students cheered, when the teacher informed them they were going to do an activity in cooperative groups.

Organization was a difficult Life Skill to introduce to the students because the students did not have much to organize in the beginning of the year. Students were given an assignment to organize an outdoor scene with many pieces on a half sheet of paper (Appendix E). They did the activity; however, they still did not have a good grasp on the concept. Throughout the year, there were several opportunities to model organization for the students, and

teach them how to organize themselves. Students were taught how to use a filing system. Each student was assigned a number to memorize. This number was not only for attendance, but also the number on their hanging file folder. The files were sorted to correspond with the colors of the tables where the students sat. They were to use these folders for keeping journals, letter packets, extra seat work, and any work that they needed to finish later. They were required to use these files several times each day. Students quickly learned they must be organized and file their papers properly or they would not find what they needed when they went back to them later. It took several months for students to learn this process, so they could file papers, have the confidence that they did it correctly, and be able to find what they needed for the next time.

When students worked at their tables using supplies such as scissors, glue, pencils, and crayons, the teacher would say "please organize the tables," rather than, "it is time to clean up." By using the word organize, students knew to put materials away, pick up scraps, and push in their chairs. Organization was also needed by the students when papers were passed out. Many students learned to shuffle the papers and neatly put them right into their backpacks. Of course, there are a couple of students who still need to continue to work on this skill.

Sense of Humor was a Life Skill that students enjoyed quite a bit. Laughter plays a big part in the targeted classroom; students really enjoyed a day that was designated to being silly and celebrating humor. Students came dressed in all kinds of funny clothing (Appendix F). Humor is a Life Skill that, in school, is really dependent on the classroom teacher. A teacher has the ability to make humor a big or little part of every day. The teacher in the targeted classroom encouraged laughter. Some examples of humorous events in the targeted classroom included: the students lit one hundred candles on a cake in celebration of one-hundred-days-of-school and when the candles were blown out the room filled with smoke which almost caused the smoke detectors to go off, but thanks to the children's quick fanning it did not happen; an actual stuffed deer head was on the inside of the classroom wall; the backside of the deer was posted on the wall outside in the hall, and the deer was dressed up to go with every theme and holiday. Humor is a Life Skill that can put many children at ease, and it creates a learning environment that is fun and non-threatening for the students.

Kindergarten is often one of the first times that students have a need to use any problem solving skills. Different from home or preschool, there is only one teacher in the classroom with many

children. Students may not be able to get their teacher's attention all of the time, whenever they want it; therefore, the skill of problem solving becomes a necessity. This is a Life Skill that is continually taught to students throughout their schooling.

In the targeted classroom, students solved their first problem of dividing a plate of cookies equally with everyone at their table. At the beginning of the year, students struggled with this task. They did not know how to divide these cookies, evenly, making sure that everyone was happy. The group worked cooperatively, though, and found a way to divide the cookies. This Life Skill was often modeled by the teacher encouraging students to answer many of their own questions. Students will ask questions or tell the teacher things like: "I don't have a pencil," "I don't have scissors," "He hit me," or" I don't know how to do that." The teacher instead of easily giving into the child would engage the child in a conversation about how they could solve the problem asking the child," How could we solve this," or "What do you think should be done?" The children, nine times out of ten, were able to give the teacher a very reasonable solution. The teacher then made sure to compliment the children and make sure they knew of their accomplishment of solving a problem on their own. Though this initially took more time for the teacher by having to discuss each incident; however, in the

long run, it eliminated students wasting their time in line to ask unnecessary questions; interruptions in student's thoughts if they were working on something; and, interruptions of the teacher while she was working with individual students.

Throughout the year, students worked on their problem solving skills by practicing estimation. Each child would take a baby food jar with a note (Appendix G) in a bag, home for a night and fill it with something that the class could estimate and count. Every student would make a guess, and then the class would count the objects. Whichever student made the closest guess received a sticker. Students used many of their own problem solving strategies to make their guesses on how many objects were in the jar. Problem solving is a skill that can help challenge the minds of all students at all levels.

To teach students the initial meaning of responsibility, students brought in a safe container an egg that they decorated (Appendix H). Students then had to be responsible for this egg the entire day. On this day, the teacher gave the students a little test. Students were given choice time in the classroom, a couple of students carried their egg with them to each area in the room; the majority of the class left their eggs sitting at the table. Meanwhile

there was a terrible crime committed; there was egg-napping and egg beating.

When it was time to clean up, many students began to then look for their egg. When they realized their egg was either missing or cracked there were many tears. The eggs were eventually returned to their rightful owners, and the students realized how much effort and hard work it is to be responsible.

Throughout the year, students were reminded to be responsible when checking out classroom and library books, turning in homework, or making sure their personal belongings such as hats, scarfs, gloves, and shoes were kept together and put away. The teacher also helped the students to recognize things they were responsible for such as: doing or turning in their homework, remembering to wear something special for the day, bringing in a certain thing, or returning a book on time. Many children initially wanted to blame this on Mom, or Dad; they slowly began to learn to take responsibility for more things and more of their own actions in the classroom.

Students picked up on the Life Skill of curiosity pretty quickly. Students read many Curious George books and wrote their own "Curious" book which was a take-off on the book Look Look. They were also able to apply their knowledge of curiosity during the unit

on "Surprises." Each day, the class would open a present that hung from the ceiling, as decoration and to peek student's curiosity. The routine of opening a present included sitting in a circle, passing the box around for students to shake and make a guess as to what they thought was inside the box.

To teach the students initiative, the teacher messed up the room while the students were gone. When the students came back to the room, the teacher watched for those students who took charge and just began to clean up the room. There was only one student who took the initiative; the teacher then made a big deal to the class about the student who took the initiative. Later on in the year for St. Patrick's Day, the leprechauns made a visit to the kindergarten classroom and messed up the room looking for gold. When the students came into the room, several students immediately began to pick up the room without being told. Throughout the year, students have really prided themselves in taking the initiative in cleaning the tables, or the room, tying a friends shoe, or doing classroom jobs without being asked. The leprechauns rewarded their thorough clean-up jobs with a sweet, green treat.

This was the perfect year to teach students flexibility. The targeted school is under construction, there is no library, office, or front doors. The entire school needed to be flexible teachers and

students. To show students what it meant to be flexible the kindergarten and first grade classes bumped each other from classroom to classroom. The students first thought this was a terrible thing; however, by the end of the day they thought it was fun to go from classroom to classroom. Students have accepted change very well this year, and once they are reminded about how flexible they were they really had no problem. Students have had to be flexible this year when gym class needed to be in the classroom, computer class got canceled, library book checkout was stopped, and the VCR was stolen.

Many of the activities described above, took place in the beginning of the school year to get the children familiar with the vocabulary. It took about six weeks to get through all fifteen of the Life Skills, teaching a Life Skill each day. Some of the more difficult Life Skills required a couple of days for the children to get a real solid understanding. There were some activities that were standard for teaching each Life Skill.

To check student's understanding of each of the Life Skills, they worked on a journal page (Appendix I). The students completed journal pages for more than half of the Life Skills at the beginning of the year, and then completed the other journal pages in March. The students enjoyed doing the journal pages during the recent

months more than before because they were able to do much more of their own writing (Appendix J) and they had a better understanding of the Life Skills. Students would draw a picture and the teacher would write down their dictation, or the children would attempt to sound out their thoughts using inventive spelling. A story emphasizing the highlighted Life Skill was read to the students and then there was a discussion. The teacher used the Life Skill literature list (Appendix K) to choose a story for each Life Skill.

Each week a newsletter was sent out to parents to inform them of what was going on in the classroom, which Life Skills were highlighted for the week, and what activities were done to experience that skill (Appendix L). At the end of each week, students received a graph (Appendix M) with the names of the Life Skills that had been studied during the week. Students and parents were on the look out for these Life Skills at home. Whenever someone in their family recognized a Life Skill being used around the house, they would make a tally. The weekly graphs were then collected the next week. This gave the teacher a good indication of which Life Skills were being practiced most often at home.

The teacher believed that the best way to teach parents how to teach Life Skills in their home was to invite them into the classroom to help for centers. Each month as centers changed, a

letter went out to parents requesting help for centers (Appendix N). In this way parents were not obligated to commit to helping every week, but could choose which days of the month worked out best for them. When parents showed up, their responsibility was either to work at an assigned center, or rotate around to help children. The children in the classroom use a routine when they needed help. They put up a help sign on their table or at the center where they were working. The purpose of this routine was to reinforce the use of several Life Skills. When children used a help sign they were demonstrating: patience by waiting patiently with their sign up; perseverance and effort by continuing to do their best at the center, skipping over their difficulties, and not wasting time by running around the room for help, or standing in a line; responsibility by taking action when they have a problem or question; and cooperation by knowing that the class, as a team, was working together with the parents, teacher, and students to help make centers run as smoothly as possible. Another way that students practiced their responsibility Life Skill was filing their seat work for centers. Students were responsible for their own work and making sure it was organized and put back in the right spot, so that they would be able to find it next time and not have to start over.

In addition to the classroom newsletter that went home weekly, the weekly school newsletter written by the principal included a section talking about Life Skills (Appendix O). Throughout the year the principal highlighted a Life Skill for the week, defined the Life Skill, and then gave an example of how that Life Skill could be used outside of the school environment. During the year, there were particular instances where the staff thought that the parents needed to work on their Life Skills more than the students. One example of this was the school parking lot. Parents were not cooperating with each other and using patience to safely drop off and pick up their children from school. The principal addressed this issue in the newsletter (Appendix P) by focusing on the Life Skills that parents needed to be keeping in mind. The parking lot situation did improve after the newsletter.

After the intensive unit on the Life Skills during the first six weeks of school, students were then familiar with the Life Skill vocabulary. There was still a lot of confusion of what these big words meant; however, the children were only supposed to get an exposure to the vocabulary. The vocabulary was used with the children on a regular basis to encourage positive behavior. As the children heard the words used more, they became more accustomed to their meanings. Life Skills then became integrated throughout

all the thematic units. The teacher had each of the targeted Life Skills listed on a piece of paper on the blackboard (Appendix Q). Students could add tallys on the sheet whenever they noticed Life Skills taking place. Effort, caring, and initiative were Life Skills that students were able to recognize frequently.

The Life Skill vocabulary is used in the classroom everyday and throughout all subject areas. The class had many discussions which revolved around the Life Skills. Each time the teacher read a story, students were able to discuss and pick out which Life Skills were used in the book.

Some other daily activities which focused on the Life Skill of responsibility were book check-out and jobs. Classroom book check-out was done on a daily basis. Five students per class each night were able to check out a book. The children were responsible for telling the teacher which book they were checking out, filling out a book checkout form at home after reading the book, and bringing the book back the next day. Some students had trouble remembering to bring the book back the next day. Many tried to blame mom or dad; however the class reminded their friends whose responsibility it really was to return the book. Classroom jobs were done on a weekly basis. Each week students would receive a new job and it was their responsibility to remember the job and make sure it was

done. Depending on the student and the job, some jobs were forgotten more than other jobs. Classmates would remind each other to do the job.

Another daily activity that the students participate in was journal writing. Students began each day with journal writing; they would write for ten to fifteen minutes. The teacher would then choose three students who volunteered to share their writing with the rest of the class. Students were caring and cooperative as they listened to each other. The students sharing their journal could choose three students to give compliments. This sharing time gave students the opportunity to feel proud of the efforts they had put in during that writing time.

Students were recognized in the classroom for using the Life Skills. Modeling was a way to continue to teach students the meaning of the Life Skills. When the teacher or a student saw a Life Skill in action, the class was told to freeze. The teacher or student would then talk about what behaviors they had just seen and what Life Skills were being used. The student who was actually using the Life Skill had the privilege of wearing a necklace that has a picture and the word of the Life Skill that was being used Appendix R). At the end of the day, the students turned in their Life Skill necklace

and received a certificate (Appendix S), to take home and share with their family, that recognized the Life Skill they used.

The kindergarten and first grade team of teachers (K-1 team) worked closely together to develop many of the Life Skill activities and special theme day activities throughout the year. The K-1 students were able to participate in wild animal days, monster day, and a train ride on the Polar Express. These special days were planned to get the children together to celebrate a unit of study. For monkey day and lion day, each student made animal masks and tails at school. The students paraded around the building making fierce animal sounds. On lion day, students then watched the "Lion King" movie. For monster day, students had to design a mask at home with their family. Home Projects were another way to get the family cooperating and using Life Skills at home.

All the K-1 students again paraded around the school and then met together in the gym. The gym teacher worked with the K-1 classroom teachers to teach students the Monster Mash and dance to Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Students participated actively in the reading of The Wild Thing. For the Polar Express activity, all the K-1 students lined up in the hallway like a train and listened to the reading of The Polar Express. The group of students made a train around the school and when they all returned to their classrooms

Santa Claus had made a visit leaving hot cocoa, a peppermint stick, and a jingle bell for each student. As described above there were several times when 180 children were confined to a very small space, due to the school's construction. Because students learned how to work together, respect one another, and cooperate, the team had no trouble planning these special days, which the children enjoyed immensely.

Special teachers also became familiar with the Life Skills and used the vocabulary often in their classes. They were also involved in many of the special theme days. The gym teacher really focused on these Life Skills during gym time. Students were constantly needing to use their effort, perseverance, cooperation, and patience when playing games, sports, or learning new skills in the gym. The gym teacher was able to see a big improvement in the targeted class's use of Life Skills from the beginning of the year to the end of the project.

The computer teacher also claims to see a difference between classes that focus on the Life Skill vocabulary and classes that do not directly teach the Life Skill vocabulary. She sees students cooperating more, listening better, accomplishing more in a given time period. This comparable difference is seen through all the grade levels involved in Life Skill instruction.

A community service project was put into place by the targeted group and the entire grade level. Students decided to send cards throughout the year to a local nursing home. The grade level teachers chose a nursing home in the area that was large enough to handle 180 cards a month, so each student could send a card. Students have begun working on special May Day flower baskets to deliver to the nursing home. Next year, students will deliver cards and/or projects for every holiday. The students felt good about this project and were able to recognize the many Life Skills that were used, such as caring, effort, initiative, organization, and cooperation.

Each grade level throughout the school chose a service project to promote the Life Skills around the school. The second grade classes donate their old books to the bilingual classes. Another second grade class writes to a nursing home. The third grade classes collects wire hangers to recycle. The fourth grade classes collect pop tabs to donate to the Ronald McDonald House. The student support center collects Campbell soup labels and the bilingual special education class collects the plastic rings from six packs to recycle and to ensure animals don't get caught in them. These service projects are recognized in front of the entire school during all-school assemblies.

The school also celebrated the National Random Acts of Kindness Week. Students filled out slips (Appendix T) when somebody did something kind for them. The principal would announce the acts of kindness over the intercom. Last year, Random Acts of Kindness, otherwise known as R.A.S.K.S., continued for the entire year. The hallways were covered with the fluorescent colored slips of paper. It was difficult for kindergarten-aged students to participate in this activity, due to the writing ability that was needed. The responsibility was put into the teacher's hands rather than the student's hands. The kindergarten students were only able to turn in a couple of slips. However, when students saw a Random Act of Kindness in the classroom it was their responsibility to let the teacher know about it. The student who did the act of kindness could wear one of the appropriate Life Skill necklaces.

The targeted school district has given support for the teaching of Life Skills to primary students. They did this by sending the targeted school's first grade team to a conference in Arizona last year. This is one of the biggest conferences on integration. One of the speakers at the conference was Susan Kovalick, the author of the Life Skill list. Her presentation centered around "brain research" and how to create a non threatening environment for children. This

past year, the district sent another building level team, second grade, to this national conference in Arizona. They also came back with many ideas from Susan Kovalick on how to teach students Life Skills and Lifelong Guidelines. The principal, Library Media Center, and gifted coordinator of the targeted school also attended the conference. In addition to the speakers, the group did visit actual schools and saw students in action using the Life Skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

In order to assess the effects of the planned intervention, the teacher used anecdotal records of students' behaviors, journal entries from students, teacher surveys, parent surveys, student interviews, and teacher opinions. Student behaviors that were commonly observed by most of the staff at the targeted school before the Life Skill interventions were verbal fighting where students were using put downs with one another and being unkind, a lack of sharing, possibly due to students just not knowing how, and off-task behavior where students weren't listening or following directions.

At the beginning of the intervention, the teacher collected journal entries that the student's had completed on several of the Life Skills. The journal pages were done as a review activity the

day after the Life Skill was discussed and the students performed an activity. Journal writing was a time consuming activity; therefore, students did not complete a page for every Life Skill. A random sample, including fifty percent of the Life Skills, was selected. The students completed journal pages for the Life Skills of: caring, friendship, cooperation, sense of humor, effort, patience, and responsibility. The data of students who were able to correctly represent each Life Skill is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

STUDENT JOURNAL RESULTS, SEPTEMBER 1995 - APRIL 1996

Of a total 41 students, the percentage of students who were able to represent the appropriate Life Skill in a journal page by drawing a picture, writing, or dictation to the teacher are:

	# of Students	% of Students
caring	30	73%
friendship	39	94%
cooperation	39	94%
responsibility	32	78%
effort	39	94%
patience	41	100%
sense of humor	39	94%

The majority of the class was able to represent the Life Skill correctly although, most of the children had drawn a very basic picture; it lacked detail to represent each Life Skill. The teacher took dictation for most of the students because very few were able to write themselves. In March, when the students were asked to complete journal pages on the Life Skill of perseverance and cooperation, perseverance was the most difficult Life Skill for the children to understand. However, 79 percent of the class was able to represent the Life Skill of perseverance correctly. Although 94 percent of the students earlier in the year were able to represent the Life Skill of cooperation, students had much more detailed responses later in the year. All of the students in the class were able to represent cooperation correctly and most insisted on doing their own writing underneath their pictures.

Later on in the school year, the teacher pulled out the Life Skill bag of objects, that the children had all received on the first day of school, to check the children's memory and understanding. The children worked together as a class to come up with almost every Life Skill that the objects represented. Many of the children suggested that the objects represented different Life Skills than were initially discussed. Some examples of this were: the ruler - a representation of caring; however, the children suggested the ruler

could also be for the Life Skill of problem solving. Another object was the friendship bracelet - to represent the Life Skill of friendship - but many students suggested that the bracelet could also represent the Life Skill of caring because they care about their friends when they give a gift. The gold star represented effort, but many students said that if they were doing their best they were also keeping at it, which is the Life Skill of perseverance. They were applying their Life Skill knowledge.

Students were each interviewed by the classroom teacher. The teacher named five Life Skills and asked the students to give either a definition or example of each Life Skill. Although the study included all fifteen of the Life Skills, the targeted teacher chose the five Life Skills that were the basic building blocks for the rest of the Life Skills. The data from this interview is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

STUDENT INTERVIEW RESULTS MARCH, 1996

Of the 41 students, the percentage of students who were able to give a correct definition or example of the Life Skill asked are:

	# of Students	% of Students
problem-solving	41	100%
perseverance	24	59%
friendship	34	82%
cooperation	37	91%
effort	35	86%

The results indicate that the most of the class understands the Life Skills of cooperation, friendship, problem-solving, and effort. Several of the students need to continue to understand the word, perseverance. If 80 percent is adopted as the criteria for the established use of Life Skills by the student population, then the children reached at least a minimum criteria in all areas except one.

A parent survey (Appendix U) was conducted to determine if the parents had seen any improvement or changes in the children's social behavior this year. Fifty percent of the parents returned the survey. Of those responding, seventy-three percent felt they had seen positive changes in their child's social behavior this year. All

of the parents who responded were aware of the Life Skill curriculum. Eighty-two percent of the parents were aware that cooperative pairs were used in the classroom. Eighty-two percent of the parents who responded said their child could think of more than one solution to a problem. The parents were asked if they had seen any changes in their child's attention span, fifty-nine percent had seen positive changes. The attention span question is a reflection on how much the child is using the effort and perseverance Life Skills.

Throughout the school year, the targeted elementary school has had a focus on the Life Skills as a building goal. Activities to help students become more aware of the Life Skills this year included: a conflict resolution program, classroom service projects, and participation in National Random Acts of Kindness Week. These activities are in addition to many of the teachers having the Life Skills posted in their classrooms. A teacher survey (Appendix V) was conducted to find out if teacher's had seen improvement in students' behavior, and if the improvement was more this year than other years. The survey was put into 31 mail boxes and 22 teachers returned them, which is 71 percent of the staff. Of those responding, 100 percent said they teach Life Skills as part of their lessons. The teachers were asked if they had seen changes this year

compared to any other year, and 59 percent commented they had seen more positive changes this year than in other years, 41 percent commented no changes could be seen compared to other years. The teachers who had seen more positive changes this year were making a special emphasis this year on the Life Skill vocabulary with their students and they all had the Life Skills posted somewhere in their classroom. All of the teachers who responded felt that Life Skills are important and should be taught to children at all grade levels. Many teachers commented on the way they teach Life Skills. Several teachers have included Life Skills in their lessons for years, but they do not teach the specific vocabulary and focus on activities that teach a specific Life Skill.

Teachers were asked if their students are making connections between using Life Skills in school and out of school, 27 percent answered only if the parents are teaching Life Skills at home, 63 percent believe that the students are making a connection; however, the connection is stronger with students who have Life Skills emphasized in their home. The teacher's based their responses on discussions with students, behavioral patterns, and observations. The results of this survey indicated that all the teachers feel it is important to teach all students Life Skills. The teachers who have been focusing on the list of vocabulary words written by Susan

Kovalick have seen more positive changes in student's behavior this year in comparison to other years.

The principal at the targeted elementary school says she truly believes in the teaching of the Life Skills. She has visited the targeted classroom more than six times, for a minimum of thirty minutes each visit, so far during the school year. Each time, she claims to see a huge improvement in the student's social skills and is thrilled to see the progress these students have made academically as well as socially. She is amazed at how well the K-1 students have picked up on the large vocabulary words, and how they actually practice the Life Skills. She has seen positive changes in many of the students' behaviors throughout the entire school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The post-observation results indicate that significant strides were made in improving kindergarten students' knowledge and awareness of the Life Skills, and continued effort should be put forth on these skills. The children need to be aware of the necessity of learning and using the Life Skills and Lifelong Guidelines. It was proven by the intervention that five and six year olds are not too young to be learning vocabulary words that are a necessity in life.

Many of the words were extremely difficult for kindergartners such as integrity, initiative, organization, and perseverance. Modeling is one of the most important techniques in teaching the Life Skills. Students need to see these Life Skills in action to really understand what they are and how important they are. Right now it is difficult to assess if the Life Skill curriculum has any major effects on these students. I believe that when these students reach fifth grade, and the middle school, they will have more positive social behaviors than other students who did not have a focus on the Life Skills. While students continue at the targeted elementary school, they will continue to receive the Life Skill vocabulary. There will be reinforcement for it each year. Reinforcement activities may include: students continuing to participate in a variety of service projects, students becoming more active in peer mediation as they mature, and students experiencing how different teacher include Life Skills in their curriculum. The primary goal for the targeted students was to teach them basic vocabulary words and introduce them to the meaning of these words. This was accomplished.

Students have shown excitement throughout all Life Skill games and activities. There is a sense of pride and accomplishment in each one of them when they are modeling a Life Skill. The

external motivation helps the children of this age to focus on the skills. They really enjoyed getting the chance to wear a necklace and take home a special certificate. Life Skills are a helpful technique in classroom management. I found my students to be better behaved this year. Life Skills helped the students and teachers focus on the positive things going on in the classroom rather than the negative. Reminding them of Life Skill behavior, also helped behavior at home. When students are told to raise their hand, it is negative and a distinctive school behavior. When students were told to put forth their best effort for listening, this emphasized a behavior needed for school and one that could be brought home.

It was real entertainment to listen to the targeted students during choice time. Many were acting out Life Skills or reminded friends and classmates which Life Skills they should use. Many of the shier kids have come a long way in learning to take some initiative in their lives. The students have really taken over many areas of the classroom by using Life Skills. They were helpful to the teacher and to each other. The classroom, no doubt, ran much more smoothly with Life Skill instruction.

Students need to know that the world is changing so quickly that we can not keep up with it. There is not enough time in school

to keep students updated with all the technology and how it affects their lives. The best way that we as teachers can help them is to teach them the skills necessary and useful to function at their very best in society. These skills include: being able to cooperate with others, making friends, putting forth their best effort; perseverance - even when things get tough, organization; flexibility - ability to deal with the unexpected changes that come about; initiative -if you want something done bad enough you do it yourself; problem solving - the drive to figure things out, responsibility; curiosity - keep thinking, wondering, and being creative; integrity; sense of humor - laughing is always better than crying; and patience, of course, is a virtue. These are the skills that will help students become successful in the world.

I will continue to teach kindergarten students the Life Skills, but I will revise the organization of the program. It was too intense for students at the beginning of the year. It had it's advantages such as, the children were exposed to the vocabulary, and I had the flexibility of using the words as the need came about. It might work out better if students learned one Life Skill per week, rather than per day. I would like to revise the journals, so students do not feel so overwhelmed with the need to write. These journal pages offered great documentation on students' progress in learning the

vocabulary; however it was not the kind of activity that students could repeat later on in the year.

Assessing the Life Skills was very difficult. In the future, I would like to devise different ways to document students' knowledge of the Life Skills continually throughout the school year. It would also be beneficial to be able to give a Life Skill assessment at the beginning of the year, and repeat the same assessment at the end of the year to document improvement. One of the best assessments was watching the kids; looking around the room, listening, and being aware of the students' behaviors. This was enjoyable, as well as beneficial in determining if students were grasping the vocabulary. Those students who were using Life Skill words and actions really displayed deep understanding.

It was also difficult to just focus on four of the Life Skills as initially stated at the beginning of the paper. Many of the Life Skills over lap, so it is an advantage to be able to categorize and group examples of some of the Life Skills. They are all important; they creep up in the most interesting circumstances.

This project identified Life Skills that needed to be developed and understood in the lives of these kindergarten children. By creating Life Skill activities the following three things were accomplished:

1. Students became aware of the Life Skill vocabulary.
2. Students practiced and demonstrated the Life Skills by the way they performed in school. Continuously throughout the year, students displayed improvement in using and understanding the Life Skills.
3. Students gained a foundation for future growth as they move on in life.

The project was successful because improvement was elucidated by the previous pages in the project. It appeared that students had a fun and stimulated learning experience. This was evident by parent's comments during conferences, socials, PTO meetings, and parent letters. Some of their comments included: how much their children enjoy school, their children model Life Skill behaviors at home, and their children often play school at home. The principal also commented on how much fun the children seem to have at school.

Because of society changing so quickly, it is important that teachers and parents instill Life Skills into these children. I believe the Life Skills will be more of a necessity to function successfully in society, than the factual knowledge we spend so much time teaching our children.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Graphing Life Skills

Graphing Life Skills

Name_____

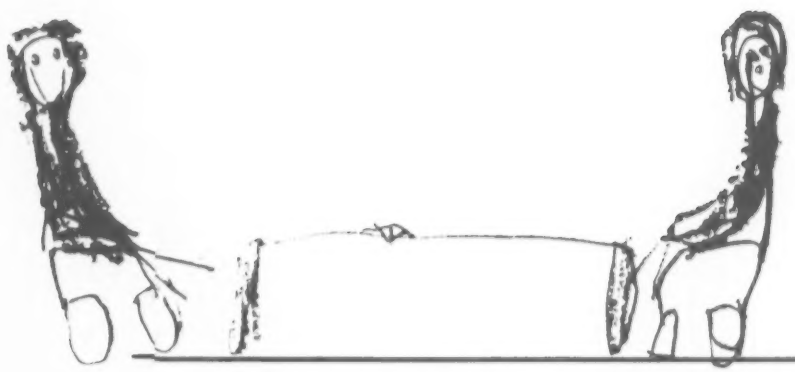
Directions: Be on the look out for these life skills at home. Every time you see one add a tally next to that skill.

Organization
Sense of Humor
Problem-Solving
Responsibility
Curiosity

Appendix B
Sample of Journal Page with Teacher Dictation

Problem Solving

To find solutions.



Me + my sister had just 1 piece of candy so we cut it in half.

Cooperation

To work together toward a common goal or purpose.

I am trying to get
to make a goal for
my team.

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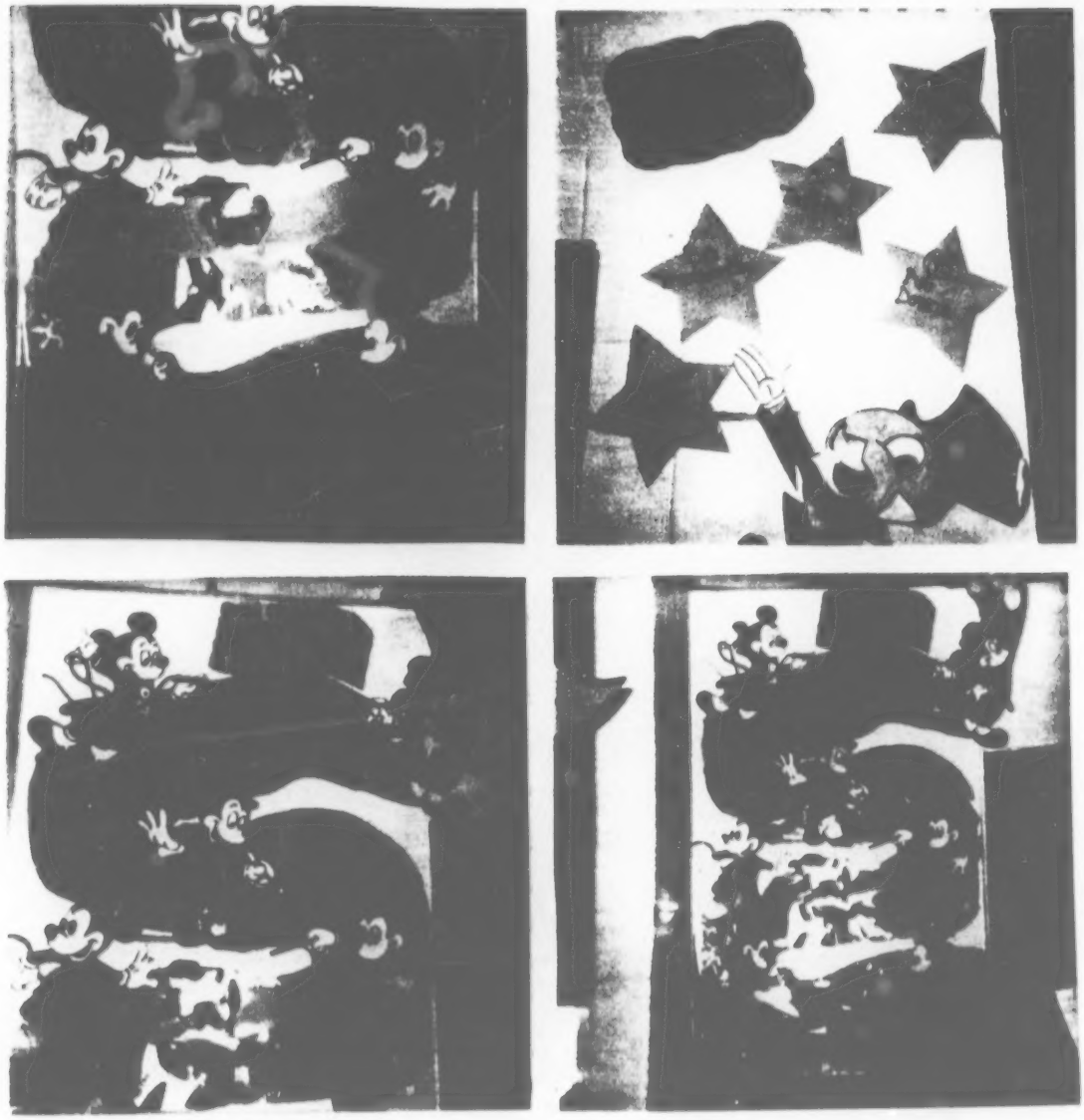
Appendix C
Display of Life Skills in Classroom



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Appendix D
List of Life Skills included in Survival Bag

Life Skills

This is your bag of "Life Skills". It is to help you remember the life skills and how you would use them everyday of your life.

EFFORT - A gold star for when you do your best.

CARING - A ruler: you can "Count on me."

PERSERVERANCE - A stick of gum, so you can stick to something and keep trying.

FRIENDSHIP - A friendship bracelet to make a new friend.

CURIOSITY - Curious George to keep you curious all the time.

PATIENCE - Good things in life you may have to wait for .

RESPONSIBILITY - A wet nap to help you take care of yourself and other things.

PROBLEM SOLVING - A pencil sharpener to sharpen your mind.

COMMON SENSE - "Smarties" to help you be a smartie when making decisions.

ORGANIZATION - A paper clip should help you to keep things in order.

INTEGRITY - Stories and Poems to help you to think about what is right and wrong.

COOPERATION - A puzzle piece to remind you to work together.

INITIATIVE - A change card for you to take charge of yourself and other things.

FLEXIBILITY - A rubber band to help you to be flexible.

SENSE OF HUMOR - Laffy Taffy because laughter should be in every day of your life.

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Appendix E
Activity Page for Organization

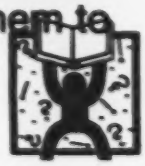
Appendix F
Sense of Humor Letter Sent to Parents

Appendix G
Estimating Jar Note Sent Home to Parents

THE ESTIMATING JAR

Dear Parents,

Today, your child has brought home the special estimating jar which is being passed around the class. Your child needs to fill the jar with anything from home that will fit in the jar such as: money, buttons, pins, cereal, etc. Anything you can think of. Your child will bring back whatever is in the jar. Also with the jar there is a zip lock bag. If you have filled the jar with several of some object. Please put 10 of the same object in the baggy. This will show us what ten of the obect looks like so that the children can then learn how to make educated guesses on even larger numbers. Your child can have the jar for two nights to think about what to fill it with, or you can send it back the next day. It may be fun to discuss with your child what has been brought in the jar and then help them to come up with new objects.



Appendix H
Responsibility: Egg Activity Letter Sent Home to Parents

Dear Parents:

As you know, one of the most important life skills for your child to learn is **responsibility**. On Tuesday the class will participate in a couple of activities in which they will be responsible for themselves and their belongings.

One of these activities will involve taking care of a delicate item throughout the day. Therefore, please have your child bring an egg to school with them on Tuesday. Since raw eggs can get quite messy if there is an accident, please boil it. However, try to keep it secret that hard-boiled eggs aren't as fragile as raw eggs. Therefore, they will have to use much responsibility in taking care of it.

I also thought that each child's egg should have a personality to go with it. Before bringing their darling egg to school, your child can decorate the egg in their own way by using crayons or markers. Their little egg will need a bed to rest in during the day (margarine containers work great - make sure it's nice and comfy).

Thank you for your effort in helping your child participate in these hands-on learning activities.

Sincerely,

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Appendix I
Sample of Blank Journal Pages

Problem Solving

To find solutions.

Organization

To work in an orderly way.

Cooperation

To work together toward a common goal or purpose.

Appendix J
Sample of Student's Work in Journal Page

Perseverance

To keep at it.

I will try my best to write.

Cooperation

To work together toward a common goal or purpose.

I dAT WIT JO PAN BASdBL
BAT I CH P.LA BASdBL
BY MYSAF

I don't want to play basketball by myself so we have to play together.

Cooperation

To work together toward a common goal or purpose.

WE R WRKIG TO
GAHR 20 WE KAN
MAC A LMANAD (lemonade
2AND 20 WE KAN
2AL LAMNAD.

Appendix K
Life Skill Literature List

Literature that Reinforces LIFESKILLS

CARING

Mama Do You Love Me? - Barbara Joosse
Charlotte's Web - E.B. White
Bridge to Tarabithia - Katherine Patterson
How Pizza Came to Queens - Dayal Kaur Khalsa
The Amazing Bone - William Steig

COMMON SENSE

Ming Lo Moves the Mountain - Arnold Lobel
Curious George Rides a Bike - H.A. Rey
Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia - Peggy Prish
Amelia Bedelia - Peggy Prish

COOPERATION

Ox Cart Man - Donald Hall
Elves and the Shoemaker - Freya Littledale
A Chair For My Mother - Vera B. Williams
Swimmy - Lio Lionni
The Turnip - Janina Domanska
Breman Town Musicians - Jacob Grimm
Little House in the Big Woods - Laura Ingalls Wilder

COURAGE

Thunder Cake - Patricia Polacco
Call It Courage - Armstrong Sperry
Tar Beach - Faith Ringgold
Knots on a Counting Rope - Bill Martin

CURIOSITY

Reitina's Journey - Barbara Margolis
Families Are Different - Nina Dellegrini
The Black Pearl - Scott O'Dell
Angus and the Cat - Marjorie Flack
Angus and the Ducks - Marjorie Flack
Curious George - Hans Augusto Rey
Lorenzo - Bernard Waber

EFFORT

Pecos Bill - Stephen Kellogg
A New Coat for Anna - Harriet Ziefert
Day of Ahmed's Secret - Heide and Gilliland
A Tree Full of Pigs - Arnold Lobel
Sign of the Beaver - Elizabeth Speare
Little Red Hen - Lucinda McQueen
Wednesday Surprise - Eve Bunting

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FRIENDSHIP

Angel Child, Dragon Child - Michele Maria Surat
Amos and Boris - William Steig
Big Al - Andrew Clements
The Hundred Dresses - Eleanor Estes
Best Friends - Stephen Kellogg
George and Martha - James Marshall
Yummers Too - James Marshall

FLEXIBILITY

The Loner - Ester Wier
Carrot Cake - Nonny Hogrogian
The Doorbell Rang - Pat Hutchins
Gregory, the Terrible Eater - Michell Sharmat
Owl and the Woodpecker - Brian Wildsmith
Phoebe's Revolt - Natalie Babbitt

INITIATIVE

Louis Braille - Margaret Davidson
Legend of Blue Bonnet - Tomie dePaola
Abiyoyo - Pete Seeger
Loh Po Po - Ed Young
Wagon Wheels - Barbara Brenner
Chicken Sunday - Patricia Polacco
Talking Eggs - Robert D. San Souci
Stone Fox - Jogn Reynolds Gardiner
Mirette on the High Wire - Emily Arnold McCulty

INTEGRITY

Chicken Sunday - Patricia Polacco
Talking Eggs - Robert D. San Souci
Adventures of Obadiah - Brinton Turkle
Diogenes - Aliki
A Pair of Red Clogs - Masako Matsuno
How the Trollusk Got his Hat - Mercer Mayer
Little Red Riding Hood - Karen Schmidt
Midnight Fox - Betsy Byers

ORGANIZATION

Roxaboxen - ALice McLerran
I Spy - Linda Hayward
How the Second Grade Earned 58,205.50 to Visit the Statue of Liberty - Nathan Zimelman

PATIENCE

Carrot Seed - Ruth Krauss

Owl Moon - Jane Yolen
Frog and Toad ATogether - "The Garden" - Arnold Lobel
Leo the Late Bloomer - Robert Krauss
Helen Keller's Teacher - Margaret Davidson

PERSERVERANCE

Helen Keller - Margaret Davidson
Legend of Indian Paintbrush - Tomie DePaola
Little Engine that DCould - Watty Piper
Charlie Needs a Cloak - Tomie dePaolo
little House in the Big Woods - Laura Ingalls Wilder
Ramona and Her Father - Beverly Cleary
Julie of the Wolves - Jean Craighead George
Katie No-Pocket - Emmy Payne
From the Mixed up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler - E.L. Konisberg
Thank You, Jackie Robinson - Barbara Cohen

PROBLEM SOLVING

"I Can't" said the Ant - Polly Cameron
Seven Chinese Brothers - Margaret Mahy
Blind Men and the Elephant - Karen Backstein
Doctor DeSoto- William Steig
Mr. Popper's Penguins - Richard T. Atwater
Inch by Inch - Leo Lionni
Bargain for Francis - Russell Hoban
The Wright Brothers at Ketty Hawk - Donald J. Sobol

RESPONSIBILITY

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie - Peter and Connie Roop
Sara Morton's Day - Kate Waters
Merry Christmas - Stega Nona - Tomie dePaola
Courage of Sarah Noble - Alice Dalghesh
The Drinking Gourd - F.N. Munjo
Millions of Cats - Wanda G'ag

SENSE OF HUMOR

Sarah, Plain and Tall - Patricia MacLachlan
Anna Banana & Me - Joanna Cole
Wind in the Willows - Kenneth Grahame
It Could ALways be Worse - Margot Zemach

Appendix L
Sample of Weekly Kindergarten Newsletter

September 15, 1995
Issue #3
Kindergarten

Kronicle

LIFE SKILLS

This week week we focused on Curiosity, Responsibility, Organisation, Integrity, and Sense of Humor. We read the book Look, Look, Look and then made our own Curious book. The students really displayed excellent responsibility while caring for their baby eggs. It was really neat to see how they responded to caring for their egg all day long. "Maybe it gave them an appreciation for how wonderful parents really are!" We worked hard on organising a picture with several parts to color and cut out. We talked about integrity and how important it is to be honest and do the right thing; the students then had the opportunity to display integrity. Today, we all dressed extremely silly. We had many laughs, ask your child to sing you the "Silly Willy" song.

Next week we will be finishing up the introduction activities for each life skill. Unfortunately, the hardest ones are left: perseverance, flexibility, common sense, and initiative. It would really strengthen the meaning of the life skill for your child, to think about the life skill of the day at home and how they could use it in their own lives. Even though, we will be finishing life skills we will continue to talk about them and use them in our classroom for the rest of the year. It would help your child, if you would continue to discuss and point out life skills that you are seeing at home. Attached to the newsletter is another tally graph for five more life skills from this week. Have your child bring it back in a week so we can discuss it in class!

Extra Extra

Thank you again for being so wonderful in bringing in your child's supplies and extra "junk" items that we could use for projects this year. It is extremely helpful. The book fair is coming to school next week. Our class book fair times are 9:45 and 1:45 if you would like to join your child in selecting books. Curriculum Night is Wednesday September 20th at 7:00p.m. in our classroom. I am looking forward to seeing you all there!!

Sincerely,

Appendix M
Sample of Student's Life Skill Tally Graph Sheet

Graphing Life Skills

Name_____

Directions: Be on the look out for these life skills at home. Every time you see one add a tally next to that skill.

Effort	1 working on shooting bow & arrow	1 "tried my best to take nap"	1 trying my best to write name with new markers	
Patience	1 patience in [redacted] restaurant waiting to go to bathroom	1 patience at Michelle's piano lesson	1 patience while reading had to answer Michelle's questions	1 patience getting well after being sick
Friendship	making new friends at Temple - Matthew 1	1 played w/ Kalen	1 played w/ friends outside	
Cooperation	1 put PJ's on without a fight	1 thinking of all our holidays	1 took shower with Daddy	1 brushing hair
Caring	1 wanted to sit next to Michelle at restaurant	1 cared for Cookie when he wasn't feeling well-petted him		

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Appendix O
Sample of Weekly School Newsletter

YOUR KILMER SCHOOL
555 GOLDVIEW TERRACE
BUFFALO GROVE, IL 60089
520-2150 FAX: 520-2601
KIM ZIMMAN, PRINCIPAL

December 8, 1995

THE KILMER KRONICLE

CALENDAR

*12/12	PTO Meeting	7:00 p.m. Lounge
12/12	Assembly: Laura Ingalls Wilder	9:15 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.
12/14	School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
12/15	Winter Break Begins	3:30 p.m.
1/2/96	Classes Resume	9:00 a.m.
1/10	Market Day Pick-Up	2:30-3:45 p.m. Gym
1/15	Holiday - No School	
1/16	PTO Meeting	7:00 p.m. Lounge
1/18	School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
*1/19	School Spirit Day	
1/22	Institute Day - No School	
1/26	End of 2nd Quarter	

*NOTE: CHANGE OF DATE

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK...

BY KIM ZIMMAN

Focus on...LIFESKILLS

Common Sense: To use good judgment
Cooperation: To work together toward a common goal or purpose

We see Kilmer students demonstrating good use of these two LIFESKILLS daily, through their cooperative group work, their classroom goals and their everyday living. Unfortunately, I must ask parents to do a better job of using and modeling these two skills when dropping off and picking up students in front of school. The past two weeks have been especially bad in the morning. If you see that the buses are unloading children, please use common sense and cooperation in getting all children safely out of cars. I have seen several "near miss" accidents because cars are moving too quickly, drivers can't see around buses, and drivers aren't looking before pulling away. I have seen parents back up and exit through the entrance because they don't have time to wait for buses to unload. If you are unable to wait, please don't pull into the circle. Park on the street and walk your child to the school, or drop your child at the sidewalk and watch him/her walk to the school. Also, we've had several incidents where parents have left cars running and gone into the school. Again, this may be more convenient, but it is very dangerous! Please remember: COOPERATION is working together toward a common goal - that common goal is the safety and education of EACH AND EVERY KILMER STUDENT!!

Taken from 9/95: The Model (Kovalik)

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Appendix N
Sample of Center Letter Sent Home to Parents

Dear Parents,

I hope that you had an enjoyable holiday and had the opportunity to have some special family time. Unfortunately, the holidays just fly by and now we are back to work. I would like to do a snowman project with the children; however, I will need your help. We need to collect the 2-liter pop bottles. Each child will need one. When you finish your pop, please remove the label and rinse out the bottle - thank you.

Before vacation, I had a some parents that helped out a couple of times at centers, and it really worked out well. I have just a few of the dates for upcoming center days. When the quarter ends, center days may get changed a little bit,due to schedule changes in some of our specials. If none of these days work out for you maybe next month will be better.

For the A.M. class, we will have centers on:

Tuesday January 9th,
Friday January 12th,
Wednesday January 17th,
and Wednesday January 24th at 10:00a.m.

For the P.M. class, we will have centers on:

Monday January 8th,
Thursday January 11th,
Thursday January 18th,
and Thursday January 25th at 2:00 p.m.

Please circle the day/days that you would like to come in and help. I will then send the note back to you confirming the day. Thank you for volunteering your time, it is really appreciated!!

Sincerely,

[illegible] KILMER SCHOOL
[illegible] GOLF TOWER TERRACE
[illegible] GROVE, IL 60089
[illegible]-360 FAX: 520-3601
[illegible]KILMER.K12.IL.US

October 5, 1995

THE KILMER KRONICLE

CALENDAR

10/9	**NO SCHOOL**	
10/9-13	Fire Prevention Week	
10/13	School Spirit Day - Pajama Day	
10/13	Parent-Tutor Program Tea & Training	2:15 p.m. Room 105
10/16	PTO Meeting	7:00 p.m.
10/19	District 21 School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
10/20	Half-Day: No School in Afternoon (Teacher In-Service)	
10/20	Pumpkin Patch	6:30 p.m.
10/25	Market Day Pick-Up	2:30-3:45 Gym
10/25	Cooper Challenge (5th Gr.)	4:00 p.m. Cooper
10/25	Parent Workshop: Make-n-Take	6:30 p.m. Classroom
10/25	Red Ribbon Day	
10/26	B.G.P.D. Safety Assemblies	9:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 1:15 p.m.
10/31	Halloween Parade & Parties	2:15 p.m.

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK...

BY KIM ZIMMER

Focus on... *Lifelong Guidelines*

Modeling is the best form of teaching Lifelong Guidelines. The second best way is to acknowledge others' use of them on a daily basis. This allows children to see what behaviors contribute to a sense of workability in life. We hope that students see consistency in the behaviors of adults, both at home and at school.

Trustworthiness: to act in a manner that makes one worthy of confidence. Do you remember that adult who was worthy of your confidence? The day in, day out sense of fairness, no surprise, no tantrums, no misplaced anger, unflagging joy of learning -- a person you could rely on. If adults model this behavior, it is possible to develop a sense of trust which will enable children to seek help, ask questions, deal with difficult situations, and generally look forward to each day.

Trustworthiness is created by consistent modeling and expecting and insisting upon trustworthiness in others.

Taken from ITI: The Model, (Kovalik, 1994)

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Appendix P
Sample of School Newsletter Dealing with Parent Problem

[illegible] KILMER SCHOOL
555 GOLDTWEIN TERRACE
BUFFALO GROVE, IL 60089
(312) 960-3434 - (312) 960-2601
[illegible]

November 15, 1995

THE KILMER KRONICLE

CALENDAR

11/16	Parent-Teacher Conferences p.m.	5:00-8:00
11/16	School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
11/17	No School - Parent-Teacher Conferences	8:00-Noon
11/22	No School - Institute Day	
11/23-24	No School - Holiday	
11/29	Market Day Pick-Up	2:30-3:45 p.m.
12/5-6	Holiday Hutch	
12/8	School Spirit Day	
12/11	PTO Meeting	7:00 p.m. Lounge
12/12	Assembly: Laura Ingalls Wilder	9:15&10:15 a.m.
12/14	School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
12/15	Winter Break Begins	3:30 p.m.
1/2/96	Classes Resume	9:00 a.m.
1/5	School Spirit Day	

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK...

BY KIM ZIMMER

Focus on...Lifelong Guidelines

Personal Best

Who decides what "best" is and how it is measured? It is not the teacher alone, or the parent alone who determines success, but rather students are given guidelines to evaluate their own performance against some criteria. The LIFESKILLS chart listed below is the beginning (not a complete list) of what teachers see as valuable tools for establishing a model for personal best, including skills and attitudes.

Integrity	Common Sense
Initiative	Problem Solving
Flexibility	Responsibility
Perseverance	Patience
Organization	Friendship
Sense of Humor	Curiosity
Effort	Cooperation
	Caring

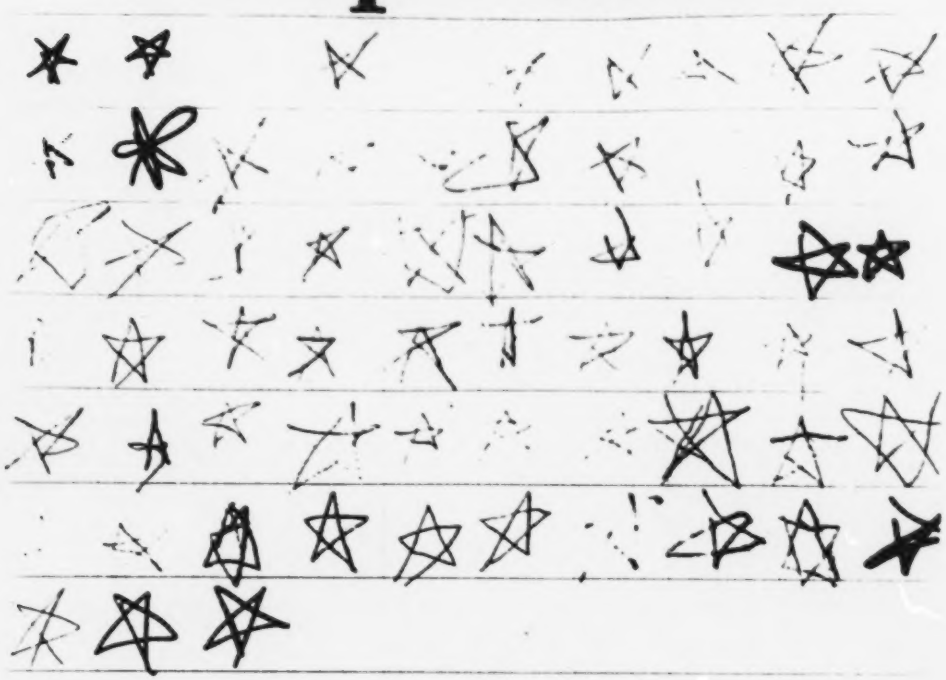
In future Kronicles, I will give explanations and examples of each of these LIFESKILLS.

Taken from PTO Today, (Kovalik)

* There will be no Kronicle next week because of the short week. Happy Thanksgiving!!

Appendix Q
Sample of Tally Sheet Used in Classroom

Cooperation



JOYCE KILMER SCHOOL
555 GOLFVIEW TERRACE
BUFFALO GROVE, IL 60089
520-3760 FAX: 520-3601
WWW.KILMER.MAIN.K12.IL.US

SEPTEMBER 29, 1995

THE KILMER KRONICLE

CALENDAR

10/2-6	Stanford Achievement Testing Grade 3-5	
10/4	**NO SCHOOL**	
10/9	**NO SCHOOL**	
10/9-13	Fire Prevention Week	
10/13*	School Spirit Day	
10/16	PTO Meeting	7:00 p.m.
10/19	District 21 School Board Meeting	8:00 p.m. Ad Building
10/20	Half-Day: No School in Afternoon (Teacher In-Service)	
10/20	Pumpkin Patch	6:30 p.m.
10/25	Market Day Pick-Up	2:30-3:45 Gym
10/25	Parent Workshop: Make-n-Take	6:30 p.m. Classrooms
10/26	B.G.P.D. Safety Assemblies	9:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 1:15 p.m.

*Note: this is a change of date (previously scheduled for 10/6)

THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK...

BY KIM ZIMAN

The Kilmer staff has chosen to focus students' attention on Lifelong Guidelines and Lifeskills this year. Each week I will highlight a Lifeskill, and provide examples of how students are using the vocabulary and practicing the skills. The Lifelong Guidelines that we expect students to live up to (and that we, as adults, model for them) are:

Be Trustworthy
Be Truthful
Practice Active Listening
No Put Downs
Do Your Personal Best

<u>N.W. Suburban CH.A.D.D. presents</u>
"The Vital Role of the Parent
as Case Manager"
Charlotte Edwards, Psy.D. and
Becky Booth, B.S., Parent/CH.A.D.D. Coordinator

Tuesday, October 17
7:30-9:30 p.m.
Samuel A. Kirk School
520 S. Plum Grove Road, Palatine
$5 Non-members

ADD is a syndrome characterized by serious and persistent difficulties with attention span, impulse control, and often, hyperactivity. CH.A.D.D. is a national support organization and information source. Chapter voice mail 303-1199.
Please do not call Kirk School
Parent Support and Adult ADD meetings also available

Appendix R
Sample of Life Skill Necklaces

Appendix S
Life Skill Certificates

_____

really took the INITIATIVE today! Way to take charge of a situation.

Miss Orkin

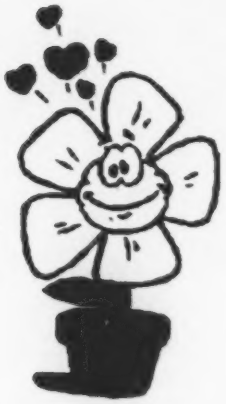
_____

_____

SHOWED PERSERVERANCE TODAY. WAY TO KEEP AT IT!!!!

MISS ORKIN

_____



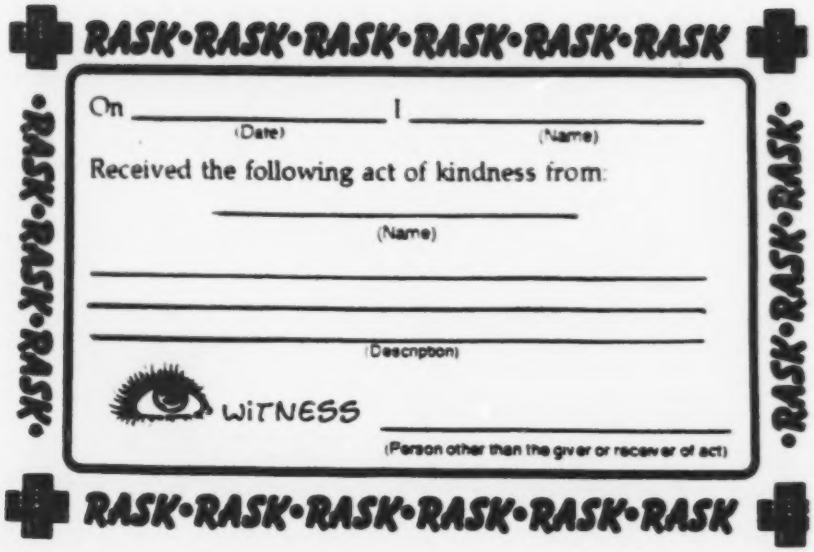
did some very caring things today. Thank you for your kindness!!

Miss Orkin

really used Problem Solving Skills today. What a great thinker!!!

Miss Orkin

Appendix T
Sample of RASK Slip



Appendix U
Parent Survey

March 6, 1996

Dear Parents,

In September, I informed you that one of my goals for your children was to introduce them to life skills. We have been doing many activities to achieve that goal, not only as a class, but also as a team, and as a school.

As a part of my Action Research for my Master's Program, I have been recording the results of the interventions I have undertaken. Now I need your help. I would like to know how much you have been aware of our activities and what changes, if any, you have seen in your child.

I would like you to fill out the survey that is attached to this letter. You do not need to sign your name and your answers will be kept confidential. Please feel free to write any comments on any of the questions. Please return this to me by Friday, March 8, 1996.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I really appreciate your efforts.

Sincerely,

Parent Survey

1. Have you seen any changes in your child's social behavior this year? (Please list specific examples.)

2. Can your child explain to you what these life skills are? Please circle

Cooperation-	yes	no	I don't know
Friendship -	yes	no	I don't know
Problem Solving -	yes	no	I don't know
Perseverance -	yes	no	I don't know
Effort-	yes	no	I don't know

3. Have you been aware that we have been working on life skills in the classroom?

yes no I don't know

4. Are you aware that your child frequently works in cooperative pairs or groups to share ideas and to learn to work with others?

yes no I don't know

5. Can your child think of more than one answer to a question or a problem?

yes no I don't know

6. Have you seen changes in your child's attention span this year? (Please list specific examples.)

Appendix V
Teacher Survey

March 1, 1996

Dear Teachers,

I don't know how many of you are aware that I am working on my Action Research right now to complete my Master's Program in May. My paper topic focuses on the Life Skills. I know what an extremely busy time it is in the year right now; however, it would really help me out if you could take the time to complete the survey on the back of this paper. You do not need to sign your name, and responses will be kept completely confidential. Please feel free to add any comments you would like on the sheet. Please Please Please return this to me by Friday March 8, 1996. I realize this is a short time!!

Thanking you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter. I really appreciate it!!

Sincerely,

Teacher Survey

Please check your grade level:

Primary Intermediate Specials

Please answer the following questions as completely as you can.

1. Do you teach life skills as part of your lessons?

yes no I don't know

**If you answered yes, do you see any changes in student's social behavior this year compared to other years you have taught?

2. Do you feel that life skills should be taught to children at the grade level you teach?

yes no

Please explain your answer.

3. Do you think your students see a connection between using life skills in school and out of school?